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FRANK S. BROWN

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CONTINGENT DITTIES.

CONTINGENT DITTIES

*And Other Soldier Songs
of the Great War*

By
FRANK S. BROWN

Sergeant, P.P.C.L.I.
(The Pats.)

Edited by
HOLBROOK JACKSON

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TO

H. E. C.



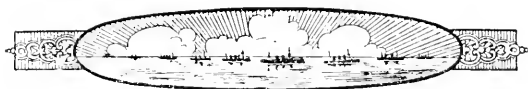
PREFACE.

*Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhopèd scene
That men call age; and those who would have
been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.*

RUPERT BROOKE.

No nation goes to war other than seriously: neither have we. But, after our manner, we have hidden our seriousness in laughter and song. Yet the earnestness of our soldiers reveals itself in spite of that invincible gaiety of bearing which has baffled the less observant among our friends and enemies. It is revealed in the letters from the Front which have been published in the newspapers; and again in the numerous poems born in the war zone (sometimes in the trenches under fire) and in the military encampments throughout the Empire. As editor of *T.P.'s Weekly* it has been my privilege and good fortune to read much in this inspiring literature of the moment, and in that way I became acquainted with the verses which follow.

In January last of the present year Sergeant Frank Brown called at my office in Covent Garden with a packet of poems under his arm.



His name was not unknown to me, owing to the fact that he had submitted some of his work to the literary critic of the above paper, who had in turn drawn my attention to it. Brown had come to England with the first Canadian Contingent, holding the position of Sergeant in the Third Company of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. At the time of our correspondence his regiment had proceeded to France, but the soldier-poet, much to his disgust, had been left behind, temporarily unfit through an influenza attack. His first letters to me were written from Lark Hill Hospital, Salisbury Plain.

Fair, slight but sturdy, keen-eyed, self-confident but unassuming ; such is my impression of the young soldier who came into my room on that grey January morning. He was the type of the British soldier : healthy, cheerful, untroubled by mental subtlety or overweening ambition, but willing to square brain and brawn with the general effort towards the attainment of an end known to be righteous and certain. All this was evident from the external view ; but the intimacy of conversation revealed exceptional characteristics. It was evident that Sergeant Brown resembled the admirable average type of British soldier only by an effort of the will, born, probably, of an equally British and equally admirable objection to being thought remarkable.

On the three or four occasions upon which we met, I learned to value the mental qualities of this khaki-clad son of the Empire. His intellectual interests were wide, and, although backed up by a considerable bookish experi-



ence, they always sought a practical end. He was an Imperialist, but no jingo word escaped him in my hearing. On the contrary, his soldierly reticence was based in enthusiasm for personal endeavour. "The Empire is kept going by character," he said on one occasion, "not by shouting." He had read much in modern literature; liked Rudyard Kipling "where he resembled Whitman," he said, and Whitman "where he resembled Kipling." Then he pulled himself up as though concerned at having convicted himself of a thing he loathed, namely, modern verbal cleverness. I reassured him, knowing his robust tastes. That was the man. He would talk, long and well, but the note was sincere rather than brilliant, and generally impersonal. I failed to get him to talk about himself. His two immediate wishes were to get to the Front, where his comrades were fighting with undying heroism, and to have his poems published. Both wishes have now been gratified; but Sergeant Brown lived only to enjoy the first, and that only for a few brief hours, for he was shot during his first day in the trenches at St. Eloi, on February 3rd, 1915.

Sergeant Frank S. Brown was born in Canada. His father is the Rev. S. G. Brown, of Almonte, Ontario. His interests combined a love of outdoor life and intellectual pursuits. He was a good horseman and first-class shot, as well as a musician and a writer of considerable promise. A part of his life was spent in the great West of the Dominion. Just before the War he was an enthusiastic worker in the Boy Scout movement, having become a scoutmaster in the Quebec district. Helpful and cheerful, he won many



friends, and his acquaintanceship was valued wherever he went. When war was declared, he was one of the first to join the colours, and his keenness as a soldier won him early promotion, and, latterly, recommendation for a commission. The following extract from a letter addressed by Captain Talbot M. Papineau to the Rev. S. G. Brown tells, in simple and reverent words, both of the death of Sergeant Brown and the esteem in which he was held:—

You were right in surmising that I crossed to France with your son in the first draft for our regiment. I had, indeed, been closely associated with him from the beginning. We went immediately into the firing-line, and he was actually in the trench of which I was in command when he was killed. As you know, he was an expert shot, and he showed at once the most commendable enthusiasm in his work. Indeed, it was this which caused his death. During the first day he fired nearly eighty rounds at the enemy, probably as much as the rest of the Company put together, and undoubtedly attracted the attention of the German sharpshooters to himself. About 3.30 that same afternoon he was struck in the head and died instantly and without pain. That evening we reverently buried him behind the firing-line—a short distance—with his feet to a large tree and his head to the enemy. A wooden cross was erected to his memory. Either myself or Corporal Smithers of my Company could direct you to the exact spot. It lies between what were afterwards known as trenches 23B and 23C—in front of “Shelley Farm”—and within sight of the famous “mound of death” of St. Eloi. There are many of his comrades and many of his officers who are buried within a short distance of him.

Had he lived I am sure he would have won signal distinction. He was a conscientious and reliable soldier, a skilful and courageous marksman. It is, indeed, one of the sad things of this war that those who will have done most and sacrificed most to bring it to a successful conclusion will not be there to receive their earthly reward nor share the glory of the achievement.



It must be a comfort to you to know that your son died bravely and honourably in the discharge of his duties.

During his visit to London he put up at the Veterans' Club in High Holborn, and there he met and won the friendship of Major Arthur Haggard, the founder of that excellent institution, who has kindly given me the following impression of him : —

My recollections of Sergeant Brown are very pleasant. He visited this Club as an honorary member when the P.P.C.L.I. first came over from Canada, and were stationed at Salisbury Plain, and again when he was on furlough after he was discharged from hospital, where he had been suffering from influenza, before he went to join his regiment at the Front. During his short visits to the Club he endeared himself to the members, and was well known by them, as he was an excellent pianist and sang very well (he had a really good baritone voice and good style of singing), assisting two or three times at our concerts. I saw him personally just before he left to rejoin at Tidworth for the Front, and had one letter from him to say that he was on the point of starting for the Front. It gave me a great shock when, only a few days after, I saw his death announced in the list of casualties.

He was certainly a young fellow of talent, as his poems show. I think "The Convoy" especially fine, and had he lived I cannot but think he would have distinguished himself as a writer of poetry alone.

There is abundant evidence of Brown's popularity among his comrades and superior officers. Captain Buller, who succeeded to the command of the "Pats" on the death of Colonel Farquhar, wrote me, in March last, that Sergeant Brown was well known in his regiment, and "a great loss to the battalion." And other appreciations have reached me, orally and by letter, from those who were his more immediate comrades, many of whom have expressed a desire



to possess his poems in a more convenient form than that of clippings from the papers of their original appearance.

Of the poems printed here some have appeared in periodicals. "Letters" was first published in *The Ottawa Citizen*, and copied by many Canadian papers; "The Call" and "The Convoy" appeared in *T.P.'s Weekly* of March 6th in an article on Sergeant Brown's work, entitled "The Poet of the Pats." As to the literary merit of the poems, it is unnecessary to say more than a few words. There is nothing obscure or precious about the following verses. They speak for themselves. Sincere, strong, musical, they are the sort of poems which appeal to the lettered and the unlettered alike. Their fine and vigorous humanity and staunch patriotism are set forth in simple words and measures, often rising to poetic heights which Brown did not aspire to reach, and they reveal a mastery of phrase and imagery which the professional man of letters can but admire and envy according to his mood and nature. It is idle to speculate as to what Frank Brown might have done had his life been spared. Here are his poems, good honest stuff, brave in thought and patriotic in ideal, as befit a soldier of the Empire. They have the spontaneity of folk-song, and should make a similar appeal to that made by the simple ballads, marching songs, and chanties of men who have lived strenuously in the open air and mixed freely and lovingly with their kind.

With the exception of a few minor and clerical alterations, the poems are printed exactly as handed to me by Sergeant Brown. The last



poem was called by the author "The Song of a Man-at-Arms," and here I have ventured a slight variation of title, which gives the poem the traditional link with Omar Khayyam, whose verse-form Frank Brown has adopted. The arrangement of the poems is a further editorial responsibility. The plan followed begins with the Call to Arms, the setting forth of the Contingent, military personalities, experiences on active service, and reflections on war, life, and death.

HOLBROOK JACKSON.





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THE CALL.



THE CALL.

THE Flag's in danger ! needs there such a cry
To rouse the loyal blood of England's sons ?
Must Englishmen be urged to take up arms
And set their strength against marauding
Huns ?

We need no other strength but Might of Right ;
The courage of a cause both just and dear.
No conscript rolls need we to swell the ranks ;
The British soldier is a volunteer.

The Flag's in danger ! by our solemn word
A weaker nation's fate to us is tied ;
A sacred scrap of paper. Shall we let
The honour of the race be set aside ?
Nay, that may never be. 'Tho' all unasked
Come sons of colonies. Their scattered lands
Give each its loyal strength. In common cause
United, proud, defiant, Britain stands.



“FALL IN!”



“ FALL IN ! ”

*Oh ! we are a ragged, motley crew,
Each with a tale to tell
Of a life of ease—a life of toil ;
A life lived out in hell.
Whate’er befall at the bugle call
We’ll do our business well.*

THE bugle bawls a sharp “ Fall In,”
The section sergeants shout ;
A stampede on the markers,
And the company turns out.
And now you have us into line,
Just cast your eye within,
And read the tale of these soldiers hale
Who answered the cry “ Fall In ! ”

That guy with the coat split up the back,
And his forage cap aslant,
Is a minister’s son—and a son of a gun.
You should hear the boulder rant
When the rations aren’t quite up to scratch,
Or his rifle jams his thumb.
He slips a cog, and a language fog
Spurts up and begins to hum.

The other, with his moustache trimmed,
And puttees that need a shave,
Is a slum child from Toronto,
But a splendid chap is Dave.
His upper lip is his idol,
Boot dubbin is its pomade ;
He’s tried to sup from a moustache cup—
But he knows his work with a spade.



'There's another chap down on the left
Who tacks M.A. to his name ;
He'll talk of art or the price of wheat,—
To him it's all the same.
His looks are insignificant.
In a battered pair of jeans,
No one would think that such a gink
Was a graduate of Queen's.

'The sergeant of our section is
A most peculiar cuss ;
He wears a serge sans chevrons,—
No need of them with us.
His rifle's carefully curried,
He's a voice like Kingdom Come ;
He was a clod who carried a hod,
But can talk a drill book dumb.

'The corporal with the greasy clothes,
And an eye of ebony black
(He got it in an argument
With the thief who stole his pack) ;
His office-pallored face is now
Red dyed with honest tan ;
A lawyer he that was to be
A city's coming man.

Down in the motor transport lines
You will find a goggled runt
Who drives an ammunition van
'Thro' mud lakes at the front.
He always has a life-sized grouch ;
He grumbles at his fare ;
His van floor ain't a feather bed—
And he's a millionaire.



That fellow in the ulster,
Which has seen most cruel use,
And a pair of squelching rubber boots
Which leak without excuse,
He used to be a Civil clerk,
Perched high upon a stool,
But dropped his tome to learn to comb
An ammunition mule.

Yon bull-dog face with the deep-cleft chin
Is owned by a miner old,
Who has roasted in California
And frozen in Klondike cold.
His thirst is a thing to conjure with ;
He shoots like the bolt of Fate ;
The dug-out roars with his husky snores
When he's back from patrolling late.

*Oh ! we are a jolly, motley crew,
With many a tale to tell,
Of a life of love, a life of hate,
A life lived out in hell.
Whate'er we've been, wipe out the sin,—
We'll do our business well.*



THE P.P.C.L.I. (PRINCESS PAT'S).



THE P.P.C.L.I. (PRINCESS PAT'S).

THE trumpet sounded loud o'er hill and plain :
To Arms ! To Arms ! Our Empire is at war !
Come, join your colours, on the land or main,
All Britons who have served the King before.

And in the mountain mine ; by prairie plow,
They answered to the trumpet's brazen voice :
They, who had served the Empire long enow
As soldiers by profession and from choice.

No conscripts, these, in whose unwilling hands
Weapons are thrust, to wage unwilling strife,
But—freemen all, who needed not commands
To volunteer their service, limb and life.

Thus rose a regiment, as 'neath a wand,
Of seasoned men, with medalled service too :
Soldiers from every corps throughout the land—
Britons beyond the seas ; tried men and true.

This is indeed a princely gift to give
To our Imperial Realm in crisis sore—
Proud in the nation of the sturdy men,
And prouder yet of him who raised the Corps.

Then go, ye able sons of Britain's soil,
To take your place, wherever it may be ;
God speed you in the glory—and the toil,
Princess Patricia's Canadian Infantry.



THE CONVOY.



THE CONVOY.

THE sunny rose of autumn's smoky day
Had almost fled. 'The chill was in the air,
When issued forth from Gaspé's smiling bay
A grand Armada, 'neath a cruiser's care.
A great and grand flotilla, speeding forth
Beneath the oily pall of clinging smoke—
A gift to Motherland, of priceless worth—
'Th' Atlantic's lazy swells to life awoke.

Thrice ten and two great modern Argosies,
That hurried to the Field the best of youth
To bear their country's colours o'er the seas,
And herald Canada to national growth.
Great sons of sires whose willing blood has given
To our New World the sterling of the Old ;
Most worthy volunteers are these, undriven
To take up arms ; freemen, but strong and
bold.

Beneath the watching escort's wakeful eyes
'The fleet pulsed on. 'The ocean's lazy roll
Bore three long straggling lines, 'neath low'ring
skies,
Spread as a flock of geese cleave toward
their goal.
Thrice ten and two great, sullen merchantmen,
As, sullen in their cloaks of drab and black,
They freighted over thrice ten thousand souls.
How many of these same may they bring
back ?



The days roll by. The ocean slowly yields
Its bosom to the squadron's steady pace,
Until the cliffs of England rise to greet
The scions of her colonizing race
Come home—to give their all. Come home—to
fight.
Come home—though born of that far Western
land,
Where Britain's shield is 'stablished for the
right,
They volunteered to lend an armèd hand.

Oh! Plymouth, Cradle of the mighty Drake;
The haven of his vessel's hopes and fears;
Yet have you ever seen so fine a sight?
Or have you waked to such a crest of cheers
As roars aboard the transports, on whose decks
Are packed the khaki hosts? Has e'er a day
Such wealth of loyal blood, such willing hands
Brought to your shores?
All England answers, "Nay."





TO SAM HUGHES.



TO SAM HUGHES.

SAY, General, just a minute,
While you listen to the lay
Of a rough Contingent soldier,
Pulling down one-ten a day.*
If you spare me half a moment
I will not be over long,
But will lubricate my larynx
And unload a little song.
Busy Sam.

What's all this talk of scandal,
And the howls of graft and shame?
Ha! all who climb the ladder
Get a hand-out just the same.
So, pay but scant attention,
Keep your same old steady pace.
There is nothing smooth nor crookèd
In your rugged soldier's face.
Honest Sam.

And if we crib a bit, ourselves,
About the clothes and pay,
We'll back you to a standstill;
Count on us most any day.
Tho' you handed us the rough stuff
On the concentration camp,
You made us fit, 'spite blistered feet,
Sore backs, and soldier's cramp.
Trainer Sam.

* "One-ten." One dollar and ten cents, a private's pay in the Canadian Service.



You sure are down upon the booze,
And on the water-cart
Each Tommy had to scramble
From the finish to the start.
We may hold different views on hooch,
But take it from a dub—
You trained us without whisky,
But you gave us decent grub.
Temp'rance Sam.

Yes, you lashed us up to rations,
And the quality of prog
Was worth ten times its weight in beer,
Or other brands of grog.
We ain't no half-starved soldiers,
Our pay is mighty good.
You've incidentally pulled a stunt
No other person could.
Thoughtful Sam.

You took a hunk of wilderness
And made a camp of it.
Of forty thousand greenhorns,
Turned out thirty thousand fit
To slope the old Ross rifle,
March in fours, deploy, attack.
You kept us there and drilled us
Till we got the soldier's knack.
Soldier Sam.

So while on Active Service
We will do the best we can
To vindicate your views upon
The raw militiaman.
And if we pull a grand stand play
And make ourselves a name,
We'll tell them all that you're the guy
Who put us on the game.
Fighting Sam.



And those of us who take the knock,
Remember if you're there—
The wives and little kids are left
Entirely in your care.
It's up to you to see they get
A square and decent cheque
For the man whom you enlisted,
And who risked and lost his neck.
Ain't it, Sam?

I've finished what I had to say,
Except a parting word,—
Although you ain't a baronet,
Nor yet a husky lord,
We're proud of your promotion,
Which we guess was overdue,
For if any man deserved it
You can bet your hat 'twas you.
General Sam.

The following note is by Sergeant Brown :—

Major-General the Hon. Sam Hughes, born in Tyrone County, Ontario, became Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence when the present Government of Sir R. L. Borden came into power in 1912. He has unbounded faith in the citizen soldier, and has directed all his energies towards the perfecting of the Canadian Militia; his confidence being amply justified by the splendid contingents which he has mobilised and prepared for service in Europe. He is an ardent Temperance man, and has done away with the camp canteen. Yet the Canadian soldier speaks of him affectionately as "Sam" or "General Sam," and enthusiastically acclaims him as "Father of the Contingents." Major-General Hughes accompanied the First Contingent to England as Colonel, and it was here that he received his promotion.

[Since the above note was written His Majesty has invested the Hon. Samuel Hughes with the insignia of a Knight Commander of the Bath (Civil Division). H. J.]



'THE VETERAN.



THE VETERAN.

WELL, boy, you're going off to war.
I'd go again myself
If I was fit. Just reach my sword
From off that dusty shelf.
Ah, thanks! The thrill it carries!
This battered hilt to hold.
I'm mutilated, boy, but still
I'm far from being old.

Just think, a scant eight months ago
I left here strong and tall,
And with my Briton brothers
Threw in my lot, my all.
Just eight short months, but in that time
I've lived a tragic life,
And seen my fill of hate and flame
And death in callous strife.

Eight months ago I used to dream
Of glory's honoured crown.
Eight months, and in that hasting time
My idols tumbled down.
I dreamt the thrill of battle;
The roaring charge; the check;—
I never thought that I'd return
A battered, useless wreck.

Oh, I was but a driftwood in
The backwash of a corps.
I've suffered and I've risked my life,—
That's what I 'listed for.



And were I hale and hearty
I'd do the same again,
And take my place among the ranks
Of Britain's fighting men.

What, youngster? Tell about my wounds?
There's nothing much to say.
The first was in the village—
We captured it that day—
I got a bullet in the breast.
Unconsciously for hours
I lay just where I tumbled
Drenched thro' with chilling showers.

To get me to the ambulance
The bearers had to creep.
A doctor tended me who looked
Half dead for want of sleep.
They'd run quite out of medicine ;
Few orderlies beside,
And those of us who wanted to
Might live—the others died.

I needed life so much, I guess
I fought the angel back.
It's funny how you hate to die
When lying on your back.
They patched me up eventually ;
Back to the lines I went,—
Back to the freezing trench ; 'twas then
I knew what suff'ring meant.

The cutting wind nipped to the bone,
The rifle froze the hand,
And all day long the shrapnel searched
The frost-encrusted land.



To face a madly charging foe
Demands a courage bold,
But more than that is needed to
Combat insistent cold.

One day we found a French platoon :
No wounds—no blood was shed :
The poison-gas had done its work :
The whole platoon was dead.
I remember cogitating
As among that group I stood,
“If hell is anything like war,
Thank God ! my life's been good.”

But go, my boy ! Off to the front,
And let no tongue dissuade.
Go, for war's proficiency,
With rifle and with spade.
God speed you, boy ! I envy you,
As chained to a wooden peg,
I, crippled, sit with a broken life,
One hand, and half a leg.





THE GROUCH.



THE GROUCH.

“THIS world’s made up of critters,”
—Said a Private from the ranks—
“Of cantaloupes and quitters
And most unlordly swanks.
Just take our Colour-Sergeant,
He’s a bird when on the shout ;
I wish I was the Colonel,—
I’d hang the blighter out.

“There ain’t no use in talking,”
—He continued, warming up—
“That half-cut Corporal Smithers is
A dirty-dealing pup.
He took me up before the beak ;
You bet your life he did,
With evidence to hang me, sure
For bluff he takes the lid.

“The Captain hands me out a snort
With his ookey-boozley nose ;
And when he’d looked me up and down
And stared clean thro’ my clo’es,
He up and says, ‘What makes you think
You’re living in a cup ?
What have you got to say ? But wait,
Before you start, shut up !’

“Now, say, that is some justice
For a Briton born to get.
The Captain and the Corporal
And the Sergeant have me set.



'They get me seven days C.B.
And seven more, if I
Refuse to get my hair cut
When I'm told to by-and-by.

" Great Caesar's white untarnished ghost !
What's this they serve for beer ?
Hey ! Canteen Steward, what 'ye' mean ?
We want no water here.
For water hasn't any use
Except to swab your face,
Put under bridges, or float ships,
Or sprinkle round the place.

" There goes the call for dinner.
Gee ! ain't that bugler punk !
His tongue is simply rotten,
Or else the bugle's drunk.
I wish I was a bugler,
I'd show them how to blow, —
What ? Time up, Canteen Steward ?
Well, suppose we'll have to go.

" Gee whiz ! Call that a dinner ?
You could drive a mule train thro'
Between the vegetables in
That dope you call a stew.
If I was cook, you bet your shirt
I'd fix you up a treat ;
But what's the use of grouching—
Great Scot ! I've speared some meat !

" Well, anyhow, I'm finished ;
I guess I'll make the grade,
And dust my buttons off before
The bugle sounds parade.



Ain't it the limit ! Same old street,
Parade the same old way.
Most every other afternoon
Should be a holiday.

“ This world has awful tulips ”
Finished Private from the ranks
“ And ostriches, and canards,
And overbearing cranks.
You wait until I get a stripe,
I'll make myself a name.
But then, on second thoughts, I guess
I'll be about the same.”



“LETTERS.”



“LETTERS.”

*What is the call,
The Bugle call,
The call that has no betters :
The silver call,
That beats them all ?
The music call for “Letters.”*

You can take a silver trumpet
And sound the dread “Alarm.”
T. A. will spring to action
With his rifle 'neath his arm ;
But if you want to see him jump
Or run like a streak of hail,
Just take the same old bugle
And sound the call for “Mail.”

No one who ain't been there himself
Can tell just what it means
To have a live epistle
From your home tucked in your jeans.
A dripping sweet John Collins
To a thirst you wouldn't sell,
Ain't in it with the starving heart
That gets a word from Nell.

Or if the maiden's name is Kate,
Or Jean, or Marguerite,
A scented word of love-kin makes
A week's dull drudgery sweet.
Why, any mother's soldier son
Who hears that bugle cry
Just stops his heart and holds his breath
For fear he'll be passed by.



His hand is all a-tremble,
His eyes stick out like pegs.
He goes all of a quiver
From the ague in his legs.
And if his name's not on the list,
He welts like a frozen bud
Until another mail call drags
Him plousing thro' the mud.

He ain't no correspondent,
And his answers may be few ;
His opportunities are slim
To write his *billy doo*.
But when he does, it is beneath
A splutt'ring pine-knot taper
With the broken nib of an ink-starved pen
On a scrap of cartridge paper.

Now the moral is for folks at home :
Don't wait for him to write ;
And don't just say, " Dear 'Tom—must close,
I hope this finds you right."
A good, long, newsy letter
Is the best that you can yield
In the way of downright service
To your 'Tommy in the field.

*What is the call,
The cheering call,
That every other betters ?
A silver call,
A longed-for call—
The music call for " Letters."*



OPENED BY THE CENSOR.



OPENED BY THE CENSOR.

THE FIRST.

Miss Mary Angelina Craven-Hall,
Park Avenue,
The Annex,

MY DARLING,—Montreal.

'Neath a fickle tallow light
A message of our love would I indite ;
The message of a starved and aching heart,
Sick of the conflict ; sick of slaughter's mart.
It is to thee I turn. In spirit haste
To help me bear this desolated waste.
Thou art my constant comrade, and I feel
Thy presence o'er my wearied senses steal.
I lit my comfort-pipe, and in the smoke
Behold ! I saw thy face. To me it spoke
Of Love and Home, and all that goes to make
Life's even way the rose's colour take.
Oh ! would that I might hold thee to my breast,
Or, safe beneath thy care, sink into rest ;
Or feel thy crushing lips in love's caress
Waft out the soldier's cares to nothingness.
Oh ! but again to see the gloried sun
Caught in thy tresses of the gold beams spun ;
Oh ! once again to take thy trusting hand
And lead you thro' a fairy castled land.
Forget not, in the city's monotone,
The chant of faith to thee I sing alone.
And ne'er forget the sacred word that binds
Our pulsing hearts, our intellects and minds.
May God in Heaven guard our treasure-trove.
Remember I am always thine.

With Love.



THE SECOND.

To Mrs. Hiram Billican,
Near Beulah,
Minnedosa, Man.

DEAR JANE,—

I feel I cannot sleep ;
In slush and mud four miles deep,
I'll snatch a little time to write
A line or so to you to-night.
I hope the kids aren't fallen sick,
And if they're bad just use the stick.
I showed you how to make them mind—
But then you never were my kind.

In handling kids you take the cake !
I'm glad you're teaching May to bake.
I'm sending you a pound or two,
And with it here's what you must do :—
Lay in a stock of coal and wood,
And kindlery, and a pile of food.
Don't spend the rest, but take good care
To get the kids warm underwear.
About that darned old brindled cow :
If she is milking up to now,
Don't sell her until by-and-by ;
Get rid of her when she goes dry.
Tell John he's got to be a man,
And feed the pigs on swill and bran ;
And see he cleans the dirty pens,
Collects the eggs, and feeds the hens.
Be sure he doesn't start to smoke,
Or he'll be sick enough to croak.
If Harry's acting up the fool,
You'd better send him back to school.
Just keep an eye on Susie's lung,
And mind that Casey woman's tongue.



Don't fret or worry over me,
I am as right as I could be.
Now mind, I like to hear from home—
And say ! please send a fine-toothed comb.
I guess I'll have to say ta-ta.
Kiss precious baby for his pa.
I hope he grows up good and strong
To be a soldier boy.
So long.

P.S. You ought to see the grub
They hand to us.
Your loving Hub.



FALLEN.



FALLEN.

CHRISTMAS (at arms)—the shrapnel screams ;
Its laden death to earth in streams

They, wanton, fling.

Peace and Good Will—with awful stench
A shell explodes in shambled trench,
The where we cling.

Christmas (at arms)—the mantling snow
Reflects the burning town, aglow :

None stay the flame.

Peace and Good Will—no belfries ring,
No clam'ring chimes the tidings bring ;
We slay and maim.

Christmas (at arms)—this ghastly strife,
This ceaseless sacrifice of life,

Must be a sin.

Peace and Good Will—the sacred night
We desecrate ; we kill ; we fight
'Mid awful din.

Christmas (at arms)—hark ! rabid notes
Are roaring from the hostile throats ;

A bugle's wail.

Peace and Good Will—oh ! misplaced dreams
Amid this holocaust : the screams
Of leaden hail !

Christmas (at arms)—is there a trust
To nerve this arm for bayonet thrust,

Or bullet's speed ?

Peace and Good Will—was ever Peace ?
Will e'er this panting struggle cease ?
Who dare give heed ?



Christmas (at arms)— the conflict wanes ;
Each dripping bayonet thrusts and strains ;
 Back they are thrown.
Peace and Good Will—ah ! breathe the Peace—
'Tho' hate may rule till war shall cease—
 I die alone.

Christmas (at arms)—oh ! bitter thought.
Peace and Good Will—e'en this is nought
 But irony.
This agony ! . . . Hush ! . . . the angels . . . weep . . .
Peace . . . Peace at last . . . ah ! . . . dreamless sleep.
 Eternity.



GLORY.



GLORY.

WE had a little set-back.

In the tricky shadow light
Between the day and the darkness
There had been a stubborn fight,
When the last rays of the sun
Picked out in deep-cut silhouette
A stranded Maxim gun.

Our Captain spotted it and turned :
His voice rang like a bell
Amid the hurricane of sound—
“ Five volunteers for hell ! ”
The nearest five howled, “ Here, sir ! ”
Above the awful din,
Then slipped out in the twilight
To bring that Maxim in.

So, while we hustled cartridge clips,
Or pumped our magazines,
We snatched the time to follow
Those five fire-eating fiends.
The first just turned and crumpled up—
His ghastly features set—
A German had him spotted when
He climbed the parapet.

The second kept on crawling, till
He met some flying lead
That ripped away his cap and left
A deep gash in his head ;
The third was going lucky, till
He topped the little rise,
Then turned to us and wilted—
On his face a fixed surprise.



The others, scouting trouble, took
The open on the run ;
Unscathed they crossed the death zone,
And reached the precious gun ;
Then, taking it between them, turned
Back to our hiding place :
They'd covered half the distance, when
The fourth pitched on his face.

When the last man reached the trenches
He contained a pound of lead ;
He got the most when he paused and stooped
To see if the fourth was dead.
Now this lad got a medal
To pin upon his breast,
And a whacking lot of glory, too ;
But what about the rest ?

One of the men came crawling back—
He was the first to fall—
But the surgeon could not save him :
He died in the hospital.
It was hours before the stretchers
Could leave the trench to tend
The wounded. In the meantime
The third had met his end.

The second man recovered,
But the price he paid was high—
Stone blind, a bullet in the lung,
One leg bobbed at the thigh.
And this was the price of glory,
This the just reward :
How many of these were heroes,
Think you, in the sight of the Lord ?



Just one got the cross for valour,
And one the sufferer's cross ;
Three lives went out in the twilight,
Yet none account their loss.
For every deed rewarded—
For every laurel crown—
Unknown, unsung, forgotten,
A hundred lives go down.

Then in the final reck'ning
Share with the ones unknown
The glory ; give not the living
The bread—to the dead a stone.
But honour the sacred mem'ry
Of those who for honour tried--
Men of stupendous valour,
Unknown because they died.



DIVINE RIGHT.



DIVINE RIGHT.

Two kings there were, and One of these,
With pompous grace benign,
Was blindly certain of his sway
Held by a Right Divine.
Who dared this monarch's slightest 'hest
Or royal wish decline?

The Other, youthful, boasted not
Of sceptred gifts of God ;
Nor ruled by iron right of might,
But swayed with gentle rod
The hearts and minds of toilers grimed,
The tillers of the sod.

The One was worshipped for his strength,
His pomp, his regal mien,
His courtly fashions, or the height,
The grandeur of his reign.
And from his royal extorted praise
No subject dared refrain.

The Other, in his wisdom, gave
No blatant herald voice,
But through his gifted love of men
His nation made rejoice
To honour him—who honoured them—
The Ruler of their choice.

Then broke the horror—turmoiled day
Of baffled hatred born.
The One, beneath his armèd heel,
In sullied ribbons torn,
Grinded the sacred pact to which
His Royal word was sworn.



The Other,—calm, but undismayed,
Faced in a hopeless strife
His country's death for honour's cause :
 His honour and *his* life.
His land became a shambled list,
Wrecked by a rapine rife.

And for this awful ruin-war
The One must take the blame ;
Be his excuse ambition, or
Be it for nation-fame ;
His was the hand that loosed the horde :
His be the shameless shame.

The Other ?—none may censor him,
Ruled by a Hand above,—
Took up the gauge of cultured earth,
Fought for the Life of Love—
In his right hand the righteous sword ;
His left, the sacred dove.

In light of future years the name
Of One must sink to night.
The Other—Hail ! his royal fame !
Blazoned in quenchless light.
Which of these rulers two, think you,
Governed by Sacred Right ?



THE RUBAIYAT OF A
MAN-AT-ARMS.



THE RUBAIYAT OF A MAN-AT-ARMS.

Oh, come all ye who for the Nation toil :
Ye grimèd smiths, ye tillers of the soil :
Come,—would you hearken to a soldier's lay
Who ne'er laid hand to rifle nor to foil.

Away with me into the barrack square :
The clean-combed barracks in its limewashed
glare ;

Away to Tommy's home in piping Peace :
The den of fighting cubs, the lion's lair.

Here dwells the soldier in a groovèd crease :
Here rots the guard of enervating peace.

In seeming lazy uselessness he does
His thankless duty as the nation police.

His pleasures limited, his spirit dead,
Dressed in a branding coat of roaring red,
The object of the hare-brained jester's pun :
O'er him no praise is sung, no mass is said.

Lonely and forgotten he must lie,
Doing his duty most mechanically.

And fashioned women draw their kirtles back,
Lest he, polluting, touch them passing by.

What wonder, then, in lack of other cheer,
Without a home, with none to hold him dear, —

What wonder if, within a shell retired,
He drowns o'erweening loneliness in beer?



What matter if, without another's claim,
He wastes his wages on a breathless game ;
 Without a care of future, nor a doubt,
He burns his substance in a futile flame ?

For man is only man, and clay is clay,
And barrack duties change not day by day.
 'Three themes hath he to talk of : women, food,
And what he's going to do with next week's pay.

Oh, come then from the world's commercial
 churn,
To comradeship and yarning let us turn :
 Come, blow life's bubbling cares to nothing-
 ness,
As blows the froth from off the brimming urn.

Come, listen to the tales of other lands,
Where lap the lazy waves on silver sands ;
 Where dusky maids and black attendants
 crowd ;
Where 'Tom is king, and deep respects commands.

Come, feel the luring stir within your blood
Of foreign service, far across the flood ;
 Come, feel imagined heat of tropic sun,
And scent the laden oriental bud.

On sweet imagined feast he, starving, feeds ;
The thrilling tales of regimental deeds ;
 The death by valour and the life of strife
Forever be the chief of 'Tommy's creeds.

Within the peaceful precincts of these walls,
Resounding with the haunting bugle calls,
 Come, dream that in the dusk of future years
A deed of valour to your lot befalls.



What soldier yet has felt no thrill of pride
Who holds his lovèd rifle to his side,
Or oils his bayonet with a tender care,
Who in his arms lets confidence abide ?

Oh ! what envigored ecstasy in store
For he who never heard the throaty roar,
Or swept in keen exhilarating charge,
If only in the game of mimic war.

The throbbing, measured tread of marching feet ;
The unison in which the pulses beat ;
The camaraderie of common bond,
Whenever and wherever soldiers meet.

But training and the drudgery of drill
Are but a school, and he a pupil : till
The day shall break, and of war's heady cup
The soldier sups, and supping drinks his fill.

Then quaff with me a cup of liquor cold,
That, when the tale of battle is unrolled,
We may as British sons acquit ourselves—
The honour of our regiment uphold.

Hark to the cry that booms across the square !
Feel the electric tenseness of the air !

'Tis war ! Red war ! The altar flame of Mars
Leaps up and stains us with its ruddy glare.

Each eye aflame ; each hand aquake in haste ;
The burnished steel as yet of virtue chaste.

How long ? How soon may this resounding
blade
The drunken cup of war-mad bloodshed taste ?



Ah ! bustling warrior, but a moment yield
To prayer, as did the knight before his shield.

Then don the armour of your faith in arms,
Against the nerve-racked hardship of the field.

Make haste ! for lying eager on the tide
The transport strains the groaning wharf beside.

Make haste ! for, in the war zone, vandal
hands
Are wreaking devastation while ye bide.

Then breaks at last that awful morn of hell
Let loose—as grizzled veterans tell—

The soldier's baptism, and after that
The boom of guns his lullaby—his knell.

The scream of shrapnel, and the whining wail
Of bullets, drenching earth as with a hail ;

The hustling fragments as they, mocking, howl
The *finis* to a crumpled soldier's tale.

The ploughing shell that bursts with stifling
stench,

Or cuts huge chasms in the cluttered trench ;

The unit-clods that, with their gushing life,
The sodden mounds of sullen earth-clods drench.

The breathless rush ; the charge ; the tingling
thrill,

As bloodhounds leapt upon their prey to kill ;

The wine of slaughter, which intoxicates
The lip that touched the brim, nor drank its fill.

The flash of bayonet ; the blood-dripped knife ;
The maelstrom of this never-ending strife ;

The crowding souls a-hustling from the field ;
The groans and screams of mutilated life.



A group of laughing comrades—then a shell ;
A flash of belching smoke—a stifled yell ;
Then on the brain a picture sears, that shames
The torture chamber of the lowest hell.

A village sacked ; a town in raging flame—
The army-wasted trail tell—how they came.
And when this war-mad riot shall have ceased,
No earthly hand could make it look the same.

Ah ! fill the cup, another yet to drown
The memory. But to the glitt'ring crown
Of every soldier's effort let us quaff,—
Victory, glory, honour, and renown.

We know that when the battle flag is furled,
And God's own peace is settled on the world,
Forgot will be the slaughter, gone the dream,
The hurricane of war in which we whirled.

Aye, seated once again in peaceful chair,
Forgotten be the torches' ruddy flare ;
Remembered only are the just rewards—
A cross for valour ; for the dead, a prayer.

Ah ! drink that day when Earth alone by laws
Is ruled—the consummation of our cause ;
When War is banished, and his gorgon face
The ready sword will, frightened, make to pause.

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